Saint Nick



By Guy T. Viskniskki.

"There's no doubt about it-the bardess worked of all my servants are the fellows who collect and deliver the Christmas express packages."

I looked up, startled, from the box that I was preparing for expressage to the good old State of Illinois. There, before

I was preparing for expressage to the good old State of Himos. There, before me, stood—old Santa himself. I saw that at a glance. And yet there was some thing not quite right with the old gentleman's appearance; I realized that at once, too. Then, all suddenly, I torated the discrepancy—on his heary head, instead of the round for cap I had expected to see, was a flat vizored one, and the brass plate in front bore the legend. 'St. Nick's Consolidated Express Companies.'

I tried not to show my wonder—to be so impolite—but my unexpected visitor, who reads every year the minds of countiess boys and girls and never makes a mistake as to what they want, 'way deep down in their hearts, for Christmas, found it an easy task to fathom mine.

"Yes,' he smiled, an emple dimple coming into each bronzed check, 'Tm St. Nick, the Express Trust now. I had to discard my sleigh when Uncle Sam got to having so many good boys and girls that, try as hard as they could, it became utterly impossible for Dunder and Blixen and all the rest of my feet-footed little friends to carry me and my pack around to all the chimney places on Christmas. Eve. Dear, tiny twinkling feet—I shall acver forget the first and last time they falled me. Thousands of good boys and girls looked in vain for me that year—failed to eatch even the slightest suggestion of the sound of pattering deer hoofs on the roofs overhead. Ah, those little faithful creatures felt as badly about it as the boys and girls themselves. I spent days trying to comfort Viven, soft-hearted little ereature that she is; and today tears still come into her eyes when she chances to hear any of her companious recalling the distressing Christmas of '92."

Right at this point I could have sworn there eame a break in Santa's voice, and I'm sure there was a mist before his eyes, but I affected not to notice his deep emotion, and pretty soon—doubtless as a reward for my discretion—his cheery voice began.

Santa Organizes Express Trust. "I was determined not to disappoint anybody the next year, so months before Christmas was due I went to Mr. United

Fargo and Mr. American and Mr. National Fargo and Mr. American and Mr. National and Mr. Southern and Mr. Pacific—they're the men who have given their names to the big express companies of the country, you know—and told them what had happened to my poor deer the year before and all the childian sorrow that had resulted. As they are fellow-carriers of mine, they were keenly interested in my transportation troubles, of course, and were solicitous to know how I proposed remedying matters.

States and Mr. Adams and Mr. Wells-

Santa's Care of the Express Man.

"Of course, I do all I can to lighten the burden. In the New York City division, for example, when my Express trust is not operative, Mr. United States employs about 150 men, all told. When I take charge of the whole express situation, the payroll of this one subsidiary company for this particular division is doubled straightway, and the number of wagons and trucks rise from 401 to 475. Each of the thirty-five office forces is increased by the addition of four cierks. A driver is not infrequently given three and four helpers instead of one, and the platform forces—the men who load and unload the express cars attached to passenger trains, and the express car trains exclusively, at the railroad terminals in 18th Work City terminals for 18th Work City termin exclusively, at the railroad terminals in Jersey City and Hoboken—are doubled, 175 platform men becoming 200 at the smaller

Jersey City and Hoboken—are doubled. Lop platform men becoming 200 at the smaller platform.

"Then, while I've got strict orders to let no precious time be wasted in sicep, I do feed the men up until, for all the great strain put upon them. I'm sometimes fearful that the whole lot of them are on the verge of possessing belies that will rival mine for rotundity and Jelly-like shaking when they laugh."

Here that famous portion of Santa's anatomy gave an exhibition of its peculiar powers until I, in turn, was fearful less the resultant waves of motion should shake my good wife's treasured ornaments off the mantelpiece. But just as I thought a fine bit of Bohemian glass was getting ready to totter to destruction, the old gentleman managed to gain control of his middle by clasping it tightly in his two stocky arms and after a delightful little chuckle, recumed the thread of his conversation:

"I don't care who he is—terminal agent, bill-maker, bill-maker, bell-maker, caller, driver's helper, platform man, route-marker, the agent himself, who is constantly on hand in the height of the rush and in direct charge—every man is fed at the Consolidated Express company's expense in a convenient restaurant. I insist on the best of food belog furnished. Naturally the bill is large but plenty of good food keeps men on their feet, sleep from their brains, work in their hands and desire for etrong drink at a safe distance.

"By the way," he said, "that reminds me-I haven't given you an idea of the cuarmous business that the Consolidated Express companies do. I can't give you the figures for the entire country just now—my mind is so full of figures con-

Express companies that the Consolidated Express companies do. I can't live you the figures for the entire county just now—my mind is so full of figures core in ected with that twentieth order for ten million drums and as many dolls that I gave this morning to my various factories, but it will suffice to say that when I make I may be office to suit filmself and I'm dividing my time between resting and geiting in shape for another Christmas, he handles at one of his two New York City terminals from 15,000 to 2,000 express packages per day. But when I'm It—what are you so shocked about? I've heard many a good boy and girls say that—ten times that number is handled in as many hours. The system by which the work is done and my efforts to have filled the stockings of all my boys and girls before the Sand Man quits pouring sand on their eyelds carly on Christmas merning.

"Trains are unloaded as fast as they come in. Express cars attached to regular passenger trains are unloaded in the stations. Express cars attached to regular passenger trains are unloaded in the stations. Express cars attached to regular passenger trains are unloaded in the stations. Express cars attached to regular passenger trains are unloaded in the stations. Express cars and sent through from big city to big city, are run alongside covered platforms, and as the precious wagon routes which it must take to be safely and quickly delivered. Then drive ers and helpers check one another by wagon. Above Fifty-ninth street of the various extrement in the packages in the packages hauled to the various extrement in the packages hau

were soliditors to know how I proposed were soliditors to know how I proposed were soliditors by the solidition plan on them.

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work—are heaved in, trucked in, got in, some way.

"Thus, there are two unbroken streams of freight, one incoming, the other outgoing. Small wonder, therefore, that at this time of year the great platforms, 600 and 700 feet iong and thirty and forty feet wide, are piled high with Christmas gifts, great and small, frequently multing solid masses of packages ten and twelve feet high, with the exception, of course, of a few narrow working aisles running here and there.

The Greatest of Three Wonders

up the reins and was off, there came the through a jolly burst of laughte and above the sound of his swiftly moting horses! feet:

Merry Christ-mas! Merry Christ Christ-mas! Mer-ry Chris

Ghost of English Manor.

Ghost of English Manor.

A curious ghost story is told by the occupier of the Manor House, Knaresborough, a charming old mansion, parts of which date back to the early days of the thirteenth century. The occupier, A. W. Howes, recently restored the building, and during the alterations the skeleton of woman was found under one of the stail cases, and it is this discovery that has a cases, and it is this discovery that has a law. Howes to tell his story.

He says there is something about the building that cannot be explained. For merly he and his wife occupied the blu room, in which stands an old oak bed stead, on which oliver Cromwell one in the place. Concealed by a spring door.

During the night sounds of footsteps heard on the landing, and Mr. Howes as it is impossible to keep the door of the foom closed. "We have locked it and put a chair against it, and in the morning have found it open. There are no draught to account for the opening of the doc Since we have moved out of this room footsteps have still been heard, and one occasion they were accompanied by lond bump on the door of our preservant."

Mr. Howes is jocular on the subject of the contraction of the contraction of the subject of the contraction of the contraction of the subject of the contraction of the contraction of the contraction of the contraction of the contract

lond bump on the door of our preservous."

Mr. Howes is jocular on the subject this ghost, and says that neither he is his family are alarmed or indeed belies in the supernatural, but after fittle years' experience of the house they a still at a loss to account for the sound "We used to say it was Oliver's ghost he remarked, "but now we say it is a woman whose skeleton we found."

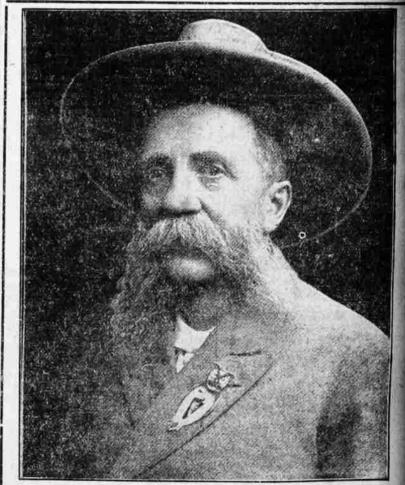
Chaucer is supposed to have visited thouse and here learned some of the Yor shire dialect which appears in bis stor. "The Reeve's Tale." It is believed to the only house in England in which stan an original coof tree. In this case an eoak of the forest, with its roots still tact, rises through the kitchen up to bedroom, where it is cut short—being longer necessary for the support of troof—and is used as a small table for the occupant's candiestick.—London Dail Chronicle. doll in it—a big, wax doll, with golden ourls—for a very, very good little girl down in Egypt. Ill. Oh no matter tow I found that out! You just harry up with that Ild—you know I personally collect and forward and deliver those express packages that have anything in them for the very best of all my good boys and girls. That's it—drive that last nall home so that precious doll won't be in danger of getting out of her box and having the bloom scraped off her dimpled cheeks. And now good day sir—and, by the way, when a tired looking chap, with a heavy box in his arms, appears at your front door on the morning of the 24th or of the great day itself. It might not be a bad thing—to wish him a merry Christmas.

By this time the stocky old gentleman, an edge of the box sunk deep in his pannch, had reached the door. The next instant he had toxsed his burden into his already heavily laden great wagon, he sprang lightly to the seat, and as he took

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